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Notice.

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AN ASTRAL DOUBLE.

"Perhaps the house is haunted, mother," said Walter. "The rent is too low for a house without objection." "Who cares?" laughed I. "Ghosts can't trouble us. They always come at 12 o'clock, and I am always sound asleep then. If you ever chance to be awake at that unseemly hour, begin practicing and that will drive even ghosts away." Our friends called, and all were charmed with our delightful little home. Walter practiced steadily and patiently and was getting pale and nervous. We attributed it to his persevering work and decided to spend the holidays in the little country village, which was our real home, leaving the piano and every note in the city. We returned refreshed and ready for a 14 weeks' siege of constant sound—musical and otherwise.

We had been in town two weeks, not long enough to overcome the effect of our visit, nor yet to be tired of the practicing, yet Walter was evidently getting thin and pale again. I suggested a mild tonic, but he did not take kindly to the idea, and I did not insist. Then, one night, I was awakened from a sound sleep by Walter standing by my bedside, wide awake, shaking from head to foot.

"Mother," he said, "I cannot endure this another night."

"What is it, my son?" I asked, thoroughly aroused by his excited tones.

"Come into my room and listen. My telling will never convince you."

I arose, threw on my wrapper and followed him into his room. He turned on the light, and we sat down and waited. Nothing unusual was heard. Walter refused to tell me what he had seen or heard, saying he preferred to see if I could experience the same thing he did. For three nights this was repeated; then I told Walter that I would exchange rooms with him, as he was getting haggard from want of sleep or anxiety. A week passed by, and I had heard nothing, had not been aroused or awakened once, and Walter was nearly convinced that his nervousness had been caused by the electric light shining in his window, producing disturbing dreams. We decided to change rooms entirely and carried all of his furniture into my room and mine into his, which apparently settled the matter. I began to joke Walter upon his ghost being off on a vacation, but I saw this vexed him and dropped the subject.

In March a friend came to visit me, and I shared my room with her. We had not seen each other for several years and lay talking together till the clock struck 1.

"There," I said, "not another word, or you will not be able to 'do' the city tomorrow. Good night."

The house was silent.

"What's that?" softly said my friend. I listened. Bump, step, step! Bump, step, step! A heavy stick was set upon a stair; then one foot, then another. Over and over till the top of the stairs was reached—through the short hall into our room. Oh, heavens!

My friend shrieked, and I flew out upon the floor and turned on the gas as Walter, white as death, came into the room.

"You have heard it at last?"

No strange person was in the room. Nothing was disturbed. I told Walter rather sharply to go back to bed and not frighten us again in such a manner. After he had gone, however, I looked carefully under the bed and into every corner, but discovered nothing. I returned to my couch a little nervous and a great deal vexed with myself. Of course my friend and I told ghost stories the rest of the night, and the ghost always proved to be a cat or a rat. We did not fall asleep till nearly daylight. We awoke at 10 o'clock. Then we laughed at our fright—knew it was not a burglar, for it made too much noise, and a ghost would not need a cane. It was plainly wholly imagination.

We tramped and rode and shopped all the next day and attended the opera in the evening, returning at 12 o'clock "used up entirely." I left the light burning brightly.

At 1, precisely—bump, step, step; bump, step, step—it came again, like an old man climbing the stairs with a heavy cane. My friend was sound asleep, and I was glad of it. Down the hall it came and in at the door. I was sitting up staring straight at it, but saw nothing. Bump, step, step—across the room to a window where stood a large armchair. I stared and stared and did not even wink, but there was nothing in the chair—simply nothing. I heard no more sounds. Breathless and frightened, I sat there till either I fainted or fell asleep. I never shall know which. The next thing I realized it was morning. Walter and my friend were up and dressed. They had heard nothing, and I kept quiet about what I had dreamed of.

Every night for two weeks this same thing happened. My friend went home, and I went house hunting. It only took me a short half day to find just what I wanted. Then I said to Walter: "This house is too small, too dark, too cold, too everything. I have taken a house on Willett place."

"All right," he replied, but I noticed he looked a little curiously at me, though he said nothing; neither did I.

When I informed my landlord of my intended removal, he said, "The house you have taken is much smaller and darker and colder than this one."

"I don't think so," I replied shortly. "By the way, Mr. B., did anybody ever die in this house of yours?"

"No, Mrs. Allen," he answered. "I bought it of the man who built it. He was an old man, John Huntington by name, who was lame in one leg, and he walked with a stout cane. He went to New Jersey to live with his daughter when she was married. He didn't want to go, though—not a bit. But he is living there now."

I moved, and I often wonder if the spirits of the living haunt the places which their hearts love.—News-Tribune.

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